

Message Text

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SUBJ: POSSIBLE ARGENTINE INTERVENTION IN URUGUAY

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY REGARDS POSSIBILITY ARGENTINE INTER-
VENTION OR MEDDLING IN URUGUAYAN AFFAIRS AS VERY REMOTE.
WHILE THERE ARE NUMEROUS POSSIBLE HYPOTHESES BASED ON
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN URUGUAY, ONLY IN MOST EXTREME
CASE DOES ARGENTINE INTERVENTION APPEAR AT ALL LIKELY.
END SUMMARY.

2. BOTH ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL ARE BELIEVED TO SHARE AN
INTEREST IN THE MAINTENANCE OF URUGUAY AS A VIABLE, BUFFER
STATE, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN SEEN BY THEM AS ITS PRIMARY
RAISON D'ETRE. AS THE TWO MOST POWERFUL STATES
IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE ONLY POTENTIAL ASPIRENTS TO, OR
CHALLENGERS OF, HEGEMONY IN THE SOUTHERN CONE, THE INTERESTS
OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE SERVED BY THE EXISTENCE OF AN
INDEPENDENT, NEUTRAL STATE WHICH AVOIDS THE FRICTIONS OF
AN IMMEDIATE JUXTAPOSITION OF JURISDICTIONS.

3. RECENT EVENTS IN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY HAVE MOVED IN
OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, URUGUAY HAS IN RECENT MONTHS WITNESSED
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A MOVE BY THE MILITARY TO A VIRTUALLY DOMINANT POLITICAL
POSITION. IN ARGENTINA, IN CONTRAST, THE MILITARY THIS
YEAR SURRENDERED PUBLIC AUTHORITY TO CIVILIANS AFTER HOLDING
IT FOR SEVEN YEARS.

4. CLOSE HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS HAVE PRODUCED AMONG THE ARGENTINES AN ATTITUDE WHICH LOOKS UPON URUGUAY AS A "LITTLE BROTHER," WITH ATTENDANT FRUSTRATIONS AND RESENTMENTS BY THE URUGUAYANS AND A PATRONIZING, EVEN PROTECTIVE, ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE ARGENTINES. ANY STRONG-ARM TREATMENT OF URUGUAY WOULD HAVE LITTLE POPULARITY AMONG MOST ARGENTINES AND, PERHAPS IN PART FOR THIS REASON, IT HAS NOT OFTEN BEEN USED TO DISTRACT OR AROUSE PUBLIC OPINION IN ARGENTINA IN THE FACE OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. IT IS RELEVANT TO NOTE THAT URUGUAY STOOD UP QUITE BRAVELY AND SUCCESSFULLY TO PERON AT THE PEAK OF HIS POWER AND MANY ANTI-PERONISTS FOUND REFUGE THERE, ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY URUGUAY IN THAT PERIOD WAS IN A FAR DIFFERENT SITUATION. EXCEPT FOR THE RIVER BOUNDARY DISPUTE, WHICH OCCASIONALLY ATTRACTS SOME INTEREST, CURRENT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY ARE NOT NUMEROUS OR SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO GENERATE MUCH HEAT.

5. HOWEVER, THE INSTABILITY OF RECENT URUGUAYAN POLITICAL LIFE HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF DEEP PREOCCUPATION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA. THIS CONCERN WAS AMPLY EVIDENCED UNDER THE LATE ARGENTINE MILITARY REGIMES WHICH MADE CREDITS AVAILABLE TO THE GOU TO BOLSTER IT WHEN UNDER SEIGE BY THE TUPAMAROS. WEAPONS, AMMUNITIONS AND MILITARY ADVISERS ALSO WERE SENT COVERTLY ON AN ARMY-TO-ARMY BASIS. REPORTED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TERRORIST GROUPS IN BOTH COUNTRIES GAVE THE GOA ADDED REASON FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE. GIVEN THE SOMEWHAT PARALLEL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR TAKEOVERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ARE BELIVED TO LOOK WITH CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY UPON THE CURRENT EFFORTS OF THEIR URUGUAYAN COLLEAGUES TO CLEAN UP "THE CIVILIAN MESS." COVERT ASSISTANCE, AGAIN ARMY-TO-ARMY, WITHOUT THE GOA'S KNOWLEDGE COULD BE FORTHCOMING, IF REQUESTED, AND THE ARGENTINE MILITARY UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD RESIST BEING PRESSED INTO ANY UNFRIENDLY ACTION AGAINST THE PRESENT AUTHORITIES OF URUGUAY, EVEN IF THE GOA ITSELF WERE SO MINDED.

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6. THE STRONG LEFTWARD TURN TAKEN BY THE CAMPORA GOVERNMENT IN POLICY AND MANY OF ITS APPOINTMENTS BROUGHT TO POWER IN ARGENTINA A GROUP WHICH INCLUDED MANY WHO UNQUESTIONABLY HAD LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF URUGUAY, AND THE TREND OF EVENTS THERE. ASIDE FROM THE ASYLUM GRANTED SOME URUGUAYAN DISSIDENTS, THE CAMPORA GOVERNMENT WAS IN POWER TOO SHORT A TIME AND WAS TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS TO THINK OF ANY INCURSIONS AGAINST ITS NEIGHBOR OR MEDDLING IN ITS AFFAIRS. CAMPORA'S REPLACEMENT BY PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT LASTIRI RETURNED THE GOA TO A MORE MODERATE COURSE, WHICH TREND IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE WHEN AND IF PERON IS ELECTED TO OFFICE, AS CURRENTLY INDICATED. WHILE PERON SPEAKS OF REESTABLISHING

ARGENTINE LEADERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA, ARGENTINA'S CURRENT PROBLEMS ARE SUCH AS TO KEEP HIM FULLY OCCUPIED IN HOLDING THINGS TOGETHER AT HOME WITH LITTLE TIME OR RESOURCES FOR FOREIGN ADVENTURES OF THIS KIND.

7. THE ABOVE IS PREDICATED UPON A CONTINUANCE OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN URUGUAY WITHOUT ANY PRONOUNCED DETERIORATION. HOWEVER, IF MATTERS THERE WERE TO BECOME TRULY CHAOTIC WITH A GENERALIZED BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND PARTICULARLY A LOOMING PROSPECT OF A COMMUNIST OR OTHER EXTREMIST TAKEOVER, A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK MIGHT WELL EMERGE. BOTH THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AND THE GOA, AS FORESEEABLY CONSTITUTED, DOUBTLESS WOULD VIEW ANY SUCH SITUATION WITH GREAT ALARM AND ALSO WOULD BE DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF UNILATERAL INTERVENTION BY BRAZIL. BOTH COULD BE EXPECTED TO SEE EYE-TO-EYE ON THE DESIRABILITY OF COVERT OR EVEN OPEN ASSISTANCE TO THE BELEAGUERED URUGUAYAN AUTHORITIES. OPEN ASSISTANCE WOULD OF COURSE RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE BRAZILIAN ATTITUDE. BRAZIL UNDER ITS PRESENT GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY WOULD SHARE ARGENTINE ALARM OVER ANY SUCH DETERIORATION OF THE URUGUAYAN SITUATION.

8. THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES ONE OF WHETHER ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL COULD OR WOULD WORK TOGETHER IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. SOME 12 OR 18 MONTHS AGO THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE AN AGREEMENT TO STUDY THE URUGUAYAN SITUATION TOGETHER AND TO ACT TOGETHER IN CASE OF NEED,
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I.E., A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION. SUCH AN AGREEMENT, IN ADDITION TO REFLECTING TO SOME DEGREE TRADITIONAL ARGENTINE SUSPICION OF AND RELUCTANCE TO USE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PREFERENCE TO DIRECT, BILATERAL HANDLING OF DISPUTES, DOUBTLESS STEMMED FROM A RECOGNITION OF JOINT INTEREST AND IN EVEN GRE

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